***Into the Grey***

**By Celine Kiernan**

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**Book Talk by Brendan Whistler**

1. **About the Author**

 

The author of *Into the Grey* is Celine Kiernan. Kiernan was born in Dublin, Ireland which would be a major influence in the settings of all of her novels. As an author, Kiernan primarily focuses on fantasy, mixing “political, humanitarian and philosophical themes”(*goodreads*). Her first breakout success was the *Moorehawke* trilogy of books, which won her the *The Readers’ Association of Ireland* *Award* for best book back in 2009. Three years later *Into the Grey* would win an award in 2012 from Children’s Book Ireland, CBI for short, for book of the year as well as CBI’s Children’s Choice Awards.

Her inspiration for *Into the Grey* is brought up in a post on the website *goodreads.* The inspiration for *Into the Grey* is stated by her to be based on her childhood summers,“I've never forgotten lying in bed, staring at the mirror, and wondering what I'd do if the next flash of light revealed something sitting in the empty bed above me”(goodreads).

1. **Summary**

*Into the Grey* starts off as a simple story of kids having to move to a new location because of a fire that burnt their house down. However, as the story moves forward it slowly escalates into a horror-mystery where our protagonist, Pat, begins to see dreams where he is in a battlefield. Worse yet, Pat begins to notice that his brother, Dom, is not acting like himself and his skin is cold to the touch almost like a corpse. Pat begins to theorize that his brother’s body has been possessed by someone/thing else and is now in a search for a solution to get his brother back before it’s too late.

1. **Quotes**

**All these quotes are taken from the desktop version of Kindle Reader**

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| “I’d had a brother. I’d had a best friend. He’d been fun. He’d been interesting: my slow-burn, articulate counterweight. Now I was lopsided, a boat with one paddle, rowing frantically and spinning in a slow, maddening circle around the space that should have been him”(158). | Pat shows the significance Dom has in his life, that he feels absolutely lost without him. That he might lose Dom forever and Pat himself will become unable to live. This depressing thought, however, is his driving force to get Dom back and shows that loss isn’t necessarily a negative thing, it can be a driving force to do better or go beyond what one is usually capable of, represented with the fantastical element that helps Pat get Dom back. This quote also shows the book’s use of family as a one of its central themes. |
| “I looked for you!” he cried. “When I came back from the war. I couldn't believe you’d left. Lacy, I had a *picture*. A photograph. For you. I had his things. Why didn’t you wait? Why didn’t you leave word for me to find you?(190) | Pat isn’t the only one that deals with loss. James, an old friend of Pat’s Nan, discusses how he was upset over Nan’s sudden disappearance after he came back from the war. James came home to a town that didn’t see him as a hero and instead spit in his face. Even after all those years people still hold a grudge on this veteran, calling him names and shoving him out of a bar. James lost everything, he managed to keep himself together, but only by a thread. His attempt at suicide was to get rid of the constant reminder of the thing that he had lost, it wasn’t until James and Dom’s rescue did the man begin to reflect on the events that happened, finally getting closure and eventually helping Pat save his brother. |
| “Laurence has been with me every step of the way since the day he died. I don’t know why. Maybe because we were such good friends; maybe because I was there when he died. Who knows? But he’s followed me since. There’s not been a night I haven’t woken up to see him standing at the window or glaring at me from the corner of the room, anger radiating off him like a curse”(213). | James reveals that the man that Dom and Pat saw on the hill at the beginning of the novel was this Laurence character. Taking the supernatural element out of the quote reveals another aspect of loss and that is guilt. Guilt can cling on to someone like cancer. Without a proper outlet, James lived in constant reminder of the friend he had lost and led himself to a life of drinking and even an attempt at suicide. This was unlike Pat who had yet to fully succumb to guilt, having people like his Nan and James believe in his situation, giving Pat an outlet and eventually finding an opportunity to save his brother Dom. |

**4. Plans on Teaching**

As the quotes above suggest, *Into the Grey*’s grammar is rather basic. However, just because it is easy does not mean it cannot be used in a classroom, infact, it makes an excellent way to introduce student/teacher expectations for the workload that will be done in class. With such simple grammar it can easily be dissected and analyzed allowing students to discuss what students think the words might convey, allowing them to analyze the text in a critical lens. An easy example would be the text’s use of the word grey. It is often referred to as a fog or fog-like substance, what do students think what this grey might actually represent? Does it represent time, loss or something else?

 There are several themes within the novel that fit the YA novel categories. As mentioned with the quotes, one of the central themes in this novel is the idea of loss and how one deals with it. A teacher can ask their students whether the actions of certain characters were justifiable in dealing with loss. Did they think that Pat should’ve given the medication for his grandmother to Dom in an effort to save him or do they think that is going too far?

**5. Text Complexity**

According to Lexicle the book is a 730L, giving it an age range of 9 to 13 year olds.

ATOS gave the book a Book Level of 5.3 and an Accelerated Reader Points of 11.0.

What this means is that the level of grammar is rather easy, as the 5.3 suggests that a fifth grader should have no trouble reading this book. The most challenging aspect of the book is possibly the characters, despite there being only 5 major characters, Pat, Dom, Nan, James and Pat’s mother. They are given nicknames or other names in the case of Dom that it can become confusing who they are really referring to, but this only further emphasises the mystery element within the novel.

 The Qualitative aspects of the book is where it becomes more complicated. The Accelerated Reader Point of 11.0 score suggests that, while the grammar level may be on the easier side, what the words mean may be more complicated and intended for an older audience. This is most prevalent in the theme of loss. Characters like James deal with loss after coming home from the war, his friends have either died or have been gone for so long they may as well have been dead to him.

. The Grey that the characters constantly mention in the book is a metaphor for life itself and the theme of loss. Actions that one makes are stagnant, yet time marches one. What happened is now in the past and cannot be changed, what happens as a result is also obstructed until the results actually show and no one really knows when.

Citations

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